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ABSTRACT

This practicum was designed to increase the level of teacher awareness of the concept of empowerment at an elementary school in the rural Southeast. A 12-week program was developed and implemented to train the school's 32 teachers in team building, conflict resolution, communication skills, team dynamics, and facilitative leadership. Weekly meetings were designed to impart these skills and to develop a school improvement plan to address school management issues and problems identified by the teachers themselves. An average of 14 teachers attended the weekly sessions, with attendance higher in the early weeks and lower in the later weeks of the program. A post-program survey indicated that although overall teacher response to the training was favorable, it was not as positive as initially anticipated. An appendix contains a copy of the teacher survey. (Contains 14 references.) (MDM)

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Empowering Elementary School Teachers Through Awareness and Training

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A Practicum I Report Presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

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This practicum report was submitted by Lisa D. Piehota under the direction of the advisor listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

May 12 1995
Date of Final Approval of Report

June Delano, Ph.D., Advisor

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ABSTRACT

Empowering Elementary School Teachers Through Awareness and Training. Piehota, Lisa D., 1995: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Teacher Empowerment/Teacher Training/School Improvement/Restructuring

This practicum was designed to increase the levels of teacher awareness of the concept of empowerment at an elementary school. The teachers at the subject school site were not capitalizing on the key opportunities available to participate in site decision making processes as a vehicle to effect change.

The author developed a plan featuring a twelve week implementation program for the teachers to receive training in the subject areas of team building, conflict resolution, communication skills, team dynamics and facilitative leadership. A set of operating parameters were developed for the teachers to use while drafting a School Improvement Plan.

Initial faculty attendance at the team training sessions was higher than expected but the attendance showed a downward trend during the sessions that concentrated on the actual production of the School Improvement plan. The overall teacher response was favorable to an attitudinal survey administered at the end of the program implementation but the response was not as positive as initially anticipated. The training program culminated with the production of a teacher authored School Improvement plan which was reviewed by the author and submitted to the site administration for acceptance.

Permission Statement

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The local geographic area was a rural area comprised mainly of a rapidly increasing number of single family dwellings and mobile homes. The indigenous population ran the gamut of socioeconomic levels. Local residents included skilled and unskilled workers, white and blue collar workers, retired persons and at certain times during the year migrant and seasonal farm workers.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The school site was a small elementary school located in a rural area of the Southeast. The main school building was constructed in 1968. It was originally designed to feature an open-space school lay-out with the capacity to house 323 students. Over time, the main school building was renovated and remodeled to allow the school to educate 410 students. The school's student population was 90 percent

caucasian, nine percent black and a one percent mixture of several other ethnic persuasions. In order to accommodate the continuously expanding local student population, fifteen portable classrooms were deployed behind the main school building which allowed the facilities to educate 530 students in grades K-6. All classrooms functioned as separate and independent entities although the school's main building employed an "open space" layout.

Students were grouped heterogeneously, except those placed in full time classrooms for the learning disabled. The goal of this educational institution was to enable each child to develop intellectually, physically, socially, and emotionally to their greatest potential. Facilitating a healthy, safe and secure environment where all students could achieve their fullest potential was the highest priority.

There were 32 classroom teachers assigned to the school site. The range of teacher ages varied from 24 to 51 years of age incorporating a wide variety of experience levels. All intermediate grade teachers worked in groups or teams with each member of the group or team specializing and instructing in one of the disciplines of science, math or social studies. The faculty was a close-knit unit and operated in a

family-like fashion.

There was a moderate amount of parental involvement in school activities. Normally, there was a core group of parents that provided assistance through the Parent Teacher Organization and the Apple Corp Volunteer program.

The author was a sixth grade teacher specializing in science related curricula. During the previous four years, the author had taught sixth grade at the same school site. Classroom responsibilities included but were not limited to providing instruction in the areas of reading, language arts and spelling to a homeroom class while also providing science related instruction to all of the sixth grade classes. Educationally related responsibilities outside of the immediate classroom included serving as the chairperson of the School Improvement team, acting as a member of the school's technology evaluation committee and serving on various temporary committees and teams when necessary. The author provided informal leadership during staff meetings and acted as a faculty spokesperson during faculty and grade level meetings.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Teachers were not embracing the concept of empowerment as evidenced by the lack of faculty participation in site based management activities and shared decision making processes between the classroom teachers and site administrators. Opportunities for teachers to assume leadership roles and contribute to the decision making process at the school site were offered by the administrators but were not being taken advantage of by members of the faculty. There were a few teachers that consistently assumed the responsibility of sharing leadership roles at the school site while the majority of the teachers never participated in site based management activities.

Teachers were not willing to dedicate the time and effort required to become involved with the School Improvement process. This lack of dedication had

negative effects on everyone associated with the school site. The few teachers who were participating became overloaded and "burned out" with the whole process while those teachers who did not participate tended to stand back and criticize the School Improvement activities. The result was an air of hostility among faculty members and an impaired educational process. Much more could have been accomplished with improved levels of teacher participation. Endless possibilities to improve the educational process were available through the concepts of shared leadership and teacher empowerment making all ideas and input coveted. Most teachers did not feel this way and were hindering attempts to make great strides in the School Improvement process.

Through Blueprint 2000, the 1991 presidential bill calling for educational reform, schools were given the responsibility and accountability for improving the quality of educational services being provided at individual school sites (Shapley, 1992). The task of formulating a method to effect School Improvement and positive change was placed in the hands of the individual school sites. Although the school site in this immediate discussion had been granted the power to make new policies and effect change, only a small

fraction of the faculty at the school site had chosen to take part in the process. There was a general feeling of apathy being exhibited toward the concept of empowerment that lead to a weak, ineffective attempt at educational reform. Teachers were not embracing the concept of empowerment. The few teachers participating in site based management activities could not be expected to shoulder the enormous burden for all of the teachers responsible for educating our youth. What was needed, but not being given, was full dedication by the teachers of the educational system to improve what was theirs through positive action not disinterest and apathy.

Problem Documentation

The most convincing evidence pointing to the existence of a problem manifested itself in the forms of the Elementary School Improvement team meeting minutes and the results of the County Public School Survey (CSS). Observations showed, that over the previous two years, teachers who were not permanent members of the School Improvement team did not attend the School Improvement meetings.

When teacher responses to the CSS were analyzed, the prevalent feeling displayed was that teachers felt as though they were not involved in the decision making

process and had not truly been empowered to make improvements. Another major concern the CSS had discovered was a feeling that professional development for the faculty was not emphasized. This situation deprived teachers of the opportunity to maintain and enhance their professional status. It appeared that without an increased level of professional development, too many teachers remained trapped in their old, outdated ways of thinking and were not able to accept the new concept of empowerment.

Causative Analysis

Several major causes for the lack of involvement and general feeing of apathy toward empowerment were focused on. Initial observations revealed that teachers seemed to be unaware of what actually transpired during School Improvement meetings and, as such, they did not appreciate the importance of the meetings. New school policies were developed and important decisions were made during these meetings that affected everyone associated with the school site. While major decisions that affected all of the stakeholders in the educational process were made at these meetings, few people realized that they were welcome to attend these meetings and take an active part in the decision-making process.

The additional responsibilities levied upon teachers through the concept of empowerment resulted in longer work days and periods of uncompensated work time. Many teachers already worked extended days spending many hours after the close of business performing job-related activities and chores. Most educators felt that they were not paid equitably and added administrative decision making to their current duties would be asking far too much.

Many teachers viewed the site administrators as possessing little or no commitment to the concept of teacher empowerment. Many teachers perceived site based management as something that occurred when it was convenient for the administration, not as something that was a regular way of doing business and making decisions for the school site.

Teachers were not trained adequately in the concepts of facilitative leadership, conflict resolution, team building, effective communication, and team dynamics. Most teachers did not feel like a team working together at the school site. Most teachers worked independently and did not work together to solve problems and make decisions about problems and issues that affected them.

In general, teachers did not feel as if their ideas and feelings were valued or desired by the

administration. Often times, classroom teachers did not see the "big picture" and failed to realize why site administrators could not incorporate their ideas into immediate plans of action. Often times, this lack of immediate response by the administrators was seen as the administration only requesting and using input when it was convenient for them.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Since the institution of education was not alone in experimenting with the concepts of shared decision making and site based management, many professional opinions as to why teachers would not or could not embrace empowerment were available. Many businesses, with varying levels of success, were also trying their hand at empowering their workforce.

Various surveys and questionnaires had been administered to educational professionals in order to identify and categorize their feelings and attitudes concerning the concepts of empowerment and shared decision making. Questionnaires administered to a pool of 192 teachers indicated that empowerment initiatives caused role conflict among teachers and administrators (Bredesen, 1992). Many teachers experienced role overload, by having too many non-instructional tasks requiring too much extra time out of the classroom,

while administrators felt that their professional effectiveness and overall authority were threatened.

A mixed sample of 400 administrators and teachers responded to a questionnaire which indicated that an overwhelming majority of those surveyed were in favor of teacher empowerment and site based management, but thought that the site administrators must also be committed to the change (Murray, 1993). When all of the stakeholders in the educational process, including administrators, were committed to the empowerment process, the success rate increased substantially.

A study of 257 teachers in six states found that the school's organizational climate, the age of the institution and the faculty experience level were good predictors of the level of success that the empowerment movement would enjoy (Short & Rhinehart, 1992). As the empowerment level of the teachers increased, organizational conflict also increased. As teachers became more involved in developing policy and making decisions, they may became more critical of school policies and managerial practices. This situation, while dangerous, was not disastrous for the program.

A survey of 170 teachers indicated that having formal and informal group leaders was essential for the empowerment process (Strodl, 1992). Many times,

informal group leaders had greater power over the group members than the formal leader. As informal group leaders, teachers were able to influence others in the group to accept and promote the empowerment process.

Various sources of literature discussed possible causes for problems that were encountered with the empowerment process. Foremost in many discussions was the opinion that administrators appeared to have agreed in principle but have not yet actually accepted teachers as active stakeholders in the decision making process (Murray, 1993). This, alone, was a serious problem. The administration was viewed by the teachers as not believing in the concept of empowerment causing the teachers to not believe in it either.

At the time, funding for activities was a problem for all facets of local, state and federal activities. Education was no different than any other tax base funded activity. Required funding levels had not been allocated in order to provide teachers with the training necessary to understand and employ the concept of empowerment (McElrath, 1988). This problem was ever-present and had to be dealt with on a continual basis.

The communication between all of the stakeholder groups in the educational process was free, clear and open to everyone. Open lines of communication between

teachers and administrators were present for the concept of empowerment to be successful (Bredesen, 1992). Effective communication was essential in the success of any task that required multiple groups working toward a single objective or goal.

Additional teacher responsibility requiring longer work hours or an increased number of work periods without compensation coupled with the fact that many teachers already felt overworked and underpaid added to the frustration and apathy being expressed towards the concept of empowerment (Bredesen, 1992; Lichtenstein, 1991; Maeroff, 1988). There was little team work being displayed between the stakeholders in the educational process. Team work was a vital portion of the overall pool of interpersonal dynamics required to make the concept of empowerment a success. The act of classroom teaching in the field of education was normally a solitary function and gave rise to various independent work habits and attitudes (Maeroff, 1988). This situation had to change and only through the increased awareness of group success versus individual success could this be accomplished.

Chapter III

Anticipated Outcomes and Evaluation Instruments

Goals and expectations

The following goals and outcomes were projected for this practicum.

Teachers at the school site will be empowered to make school changes. Teachers will be knowledgeable about the school improvement process and be willing to participate in the change process.

Expected Outcomes

There were three expected outcomes:

1. 8 of the 32 classroom teachers currently on staff at the school site will attend 6 of the 12 School Improvement and training meetings. This will be reflected in the minutes of the School Improvement meetings.

2. 8 of the 32 teachers at the elementary school will indicate an increased feeling of empowerment by responding in the "strongly agree" area to 5 of the 10

questions on the written questionnaire administered to gauge the general feeling about empowerment (see Appendix).

3. Teachers will, within given operating parameters, develop and submit a plan or design for change and/or improvement at the school site. This plan will come directly from teachers, with problem solving ideas for the school site.

Measurement of Outcomes

In order to measure the desired change in teacher perception concerning the concepts of empowerment and site based management, three instruments were used. These consist of a written survey, a teacher developed action plan and the minutes of the faculty training sessions showing attendance.

The data for outcome number one was gathered by studying the minutes of the School Improvement training meetings. The results, being teacher attendance statistics, were quantified by tracking the number of teachers that attended the meetings. A listing of all teachers attending the meetings was contained in the minutes. This measure could be used to show a trend, favorable or not, of teacher attendance as the empowerment process progressed. Increased attendance could possibly be associated with improved feelings

toward empowerment and School Improvement.

The second measure, a written survey, consisted of ten closed-ended questions featuring the following responses: strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree and no opinion. The administration of the survey yielded visible results in identifying immediate changes in teacher perception. As the test was administered directly to the teachers, it was hoped that they would disclose their true feelings concerning the empowerment process. The results of this questionnaire would be used to gage actual levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the process.

The third measure was a teacher generated action plan outlining the accomplishments of the team throughout the implementation. This plan was to come directly from the teachers' ideas for solving problems at the school site. The content of this teacher generated action plan served to display some their feelings, levels of enthusiasm and overall attitudes toward empowerment and positive change at the site.

Chapter IV.

Solution Strategy

Discussion and Evaluation of Solution

Teachers were not embracing the concept of empowerment. Many of the concerns and fears surrounding the empowerment process were alleviated by providing adequate training and raising the teachers' level of awareness of the empowerment process. Lichtenstein (1991) stated teachers must be provided with professional training and knowledge for teacher empowerment to take place. The teachers were expected to step forward and assume new and increased responsibilities so they were provided with a proportional amount of professional development and training. An increased amount of training time provided not only better but happier teachers as well.

The allocation of time and resources was increased for the training and education of the teachers themselves and, as such, teachers and administrators

began working together at the school site (Bahrenfuss, 1992). The teachers and administrators learned to learn together as well as work together.

Teachers were as comfortable working to bring about continuous school improvement as they were working in the classroom (Fullan, 1993). This was where the free and open lines of communication were present and available to all teachers. The teachers became increasingly more comfortable with the improvement process as they knew they were being listened to and taken seriously. Administrators opened channels of communication up, down and across all levels of the organization. As an effective communication was in place, teachers became creative and innovative without the fear of being ignored or ridiculed.

Time was labeled as a valuable commodity. This was especially true for teachers. Teachers had a limited amount of time out of the classroom that could be utilized for time spent on administrative duties beyond the regular school day (Bredesen, 1992; Lichtenstein, 1991; Maeroff, 1988). Asking teachers to perform additional work while not financially compensating them led to hard feelings, job burn-out and malingering. Increased amounts of time were made available to teachers to enable them to perform the additional

duties required for the empowerment process to be successful.

Description and Justification for Solution Selected

As a result of the literature review, an assumption was made that the quantity and quality of ideas that were generated and offered as solutions to problems were dependent on the faculty members' overall knowledge of the concept of empowerment. As teachers were made more knowledgeable, their power was obviously enhanced (Maeroff, 1988). The teachers were only expected to provide a level of performance commensurate with the level of training they had received. Children were not expected to perform tasks that they had not been trained for, so the expectations for teachers were no different.

Empowerment, as with any activity, was only as good as the participants made it. Teachers connected with each other and had a collegiality that was previously absent (Maeroff, 1988). There was a diversity of perspective but teachers were trained and became comfortable with the decision making process. (Willis, 1994).

School improvement did not occur without the commitment of teachers and teachers were given the opportunity to collaborate with their colleagues

(School Improvement Resource Center, 1991). In order to facilitate progress at the author's school site, School Improvement training sessions were held weekly at the school site. The School Improvement training sessions were held during normal work hours with the main objectives of orienting teachers with the history of the empowerment process and training the faculty and the administration on how to function as a single team. Wilson (1993) stated that participatory decision making was critical to the success of the empowerment process and any teacher should be allowed to participate. All teachers at the school site were encouraged to participate in the change process.

During the weekly school improvement meetings, teachers were asked to focus on problems and issues and develop a plan of action for change and improvement. The minutes recorded during the School Improvement training sessions were distributed at faculty meetings where the entire school staff was assembled. Free and open group discussion was encouraged. The feeling of empowerment evolved slowly and teachers were given the opportunity to proceed at their own pace (Bredesen, 1989).

To alleviate the feeling that the teachers were being overloaded or taken advantage of, all meetings

were held during the normal work day.

Report of Action Taken

Steps to initiate a program to improve the teachers' perception of the empowerment concept required administrative approval and co-planning as did all of the remaining phases of the implementation. Initially, informational fliers were distributed to make the teachers aware of the scheduled training meetings. The information used in building and improving the teacher knowledge base concerning the concept of empowerment was assembled for distribution at School Improvement meetings and associated training sessions.

A Local expert in the subject areas of group dynamics, school improvement processes, and teacher empowerment was solicited to provide instruction to teachers during one of the training sessions. The proposed time line for the completion of the program implementation was twelve weeks.

Week one of the time line focused mainly on training the faculty in the history and purpose of teacher empowerment concepts and site based management activities. The America 2000 plan was reviewed first followed by the state's own Blueprint 2000 plan. These two plans were compared and contrasted so that teachers could see how the school improvement initiative began

on a macro-level and progressed to a micro-level, ultimately affecting their activities at the school site.

Week two featured training sessions that addressed team building concepts and identified the different phases of team dynamics. Teachers were given the definition of a team as being a group organized to work together. The major benefits of having a cohesive team were thought to be shared visions, an increased number of creative ideas and improved communications.

Week three continued the team building training by focusing on the principle of site based decision making. The concept of teachers participating in the decision making process and making changes at the school site was invaluable in rousing interest in the empowerment process. This part of the faculty's training proved essential in the creation of a cohesive, proactive team of teachers striving for group accomplishment and benefit for the overall educational system.

Week four's original schedule was deviated from in order to accommodate the schedule of the County Director of Staff Development who provided instruction in the subject areas of roles and responsibilities and facilitative leadership at the training session. The

adjustment to the schedule was not difficult and only required a substitution of the events of week five for those of week four. The communications portion of the training originally scheduled for week four was performed during week five.

Week five stressed training in effective communication styles. Teachers learned that team members must have superior overall communication skills but should emphasize the skills of observing and listening. Teachers learned that body language plays an important part in effective communication. The teachers learned the value of body language through role playing in pre-orchestrated communication scenarios. Ultimately, the function of interpersonal communication was stressed as the most important part of the program's success. Teachers were provided with the basic tools and concepts required to build effective communication networks with their fellow educators and team mates.

Another unforeseen situation that arose was the realization that the week six training period was scheduled during the very hectic time proceeding the Christmas holidays. Historically, the holidays are an extremely busy time for educators. Several teachers were concerned that they would be overloaded by trying

to pursue the improvement process during this time. In observance of the teachers' concerns, no school improvement training sessions were scheduled during the week prior to or preceding Christmas break. Requiring teachers to pursue the implementation process would have added unneeded stress and degraded the level of enthusiasm in the training sessions. The unaccounted for holiday season and corresponding training hiatus placed the implementation process two weeks behind the original schedule.

Week six dealt with the subject of conflict resolution and consensus building. The consensus building training session centered around reaching decisions that reflected the cumulative thought process of the entire team. Teachers realized building consensus was time consuming and required patience, good communication skills and open minds. After demonstrating the use of consensus building activities, teachers understood that although everyone may not always be satisfied with the final team decision, the team members will be able to live with the decision.

Also included in the week six training plan was the topic of conflict resolution. Several common types of conflict were discussed but personal and group conflict were stressed. Teachers were taught that, during the

initial phases of the empowerment process, intragroup conflicts and disagreements would occur. This portion of the teachers' training focused on how to work through the initial conflict and disagreement and find solutions to benefit all.

Weeks seven and eight consisted of brainstorming sessions which were used to identify issues which the teachers perceived as problems at the school site. These brainstorming sessions helped the teachers begin functioning as a group while they attained a better perception of how each of the team members saw the situation at the school site. The main objective of the brainstorming sessions was to help teachers become free and open in their discussion and develop spontaneous, creative thought processes.

The author facilitated the brainstorming meetings in order to guide teachers toward the adoption of a plan for improvement of the school site. Facilitating these meetings was a challenge as the brainstorming had a tendency to go off on tangents and not address the true problems and issues. As a result of these meetings, the teachers were able to create a comprehensive list of problems and issues of concern at the school site.

Although every effort was made to end the

brainstorming sessions on time, several training sessions exceeded the allotted time period and teachers ended up staying past the end of the regular work day. Teachers were made aware that they had the option of leaving if the sessions ran over time. The author found it easy to keep the meetings on time during training when there was a predetermined amount of material to cover but when the teachers began brainstorming it became an extended process.

In week nine, the teachers identified the problems and issues contained by the brainstorming list that would be emphasized in the improvement plan. The teachers were encouraged to focus on areas where the greatest potential existed to make tangible and/or visible improvements. In the beginning, the teachers chose to list all the problems and issues under major headings. From the major headings, the areas of curriculum and instruction, professional growth and technology were chosen to improve upon.

During weeks ten and eleven, the teachers were tasked with drafting a plan of action to resolve the problems chosen to focus on. To begin the process, teachers chose one of the three areas to work on. The teachers developed their improvement plan during the weekly improvement meetings. Because there were many

problems included in each area of emphasis, priorities had to be set. The problems chosen to work on also had to lie within the teachers' realm of corrective action. The teachers concentrated on formulating strategies for achieving their objectives.

Week twelve saw the School Improvement Team deliver a final draft of their improvement plan to the project facilitator. After a final discussion with the project facilitator, the School Improvement Team's plan was delivered to the site administration for review. At this point, the teachers were reaching maturation as a team. Through much concentrated effort, the School Improvement Team was able to find a common ground for all team members, resolve intra-group conflicts, build camaraderie and solve their own problems rather than having solutions to problems dictated to them.

In order to promote a continuous, mutual thought process on the part of the faculty and administration, periods of time prior to the beginning of the weekly faculty meetings were dedicated to provide feedback on School Improvement activities, discuss School Improvement issues and encourage further teacher participation. Continual status updates were provided for activities currently in motion and those scheduled to begin.

Chapter V.

Results, Discussion, and Recommendations

Results

The work setting problem was that teachers were not embracing the concept of empowerment as evidenced by the lack of faculty participation in site based management activities and shared decision making processes. The author chose to implement a solution strategy that consisted of weekly training sessions and teacher awareness of the empowerment possibilities available.

There were three expected outcomes:

Outcome number one was that 8 of the 32 classroom teachers currently on staff at the school site would attend 6 of the 12 School Improvement and training meetings. This outcome was met and exceeded as evidenced by the attendance figures recorded during the School Improvement and training meetings. The average number of teachers attending the School Improvement and training meetings was 14. The lowest

number of teachers to attend a meeting was 8 while the highest number of teachers to attend a meeting was 23 (see Figure 1).

Outcome number two was that 8 of the 32 teachers at the elementary school will indicate an increased feeling of empowerment by responding in the "strongly agree" area to 5 of the 10 questions on the written questionnaire administered to gauge the general feeling about empowerment (see Appendix). Out of the 32 teachers present at the school site, only 15 teachers actually completed and returned the survey. This outcome was not met as the "strongly agree" response was not selected by 8 of the 15 respondents (see Table 1).

Outcome number three was that teachers, within given operating parameters, would develop and submit a plan or design for change and/or improvement at the school site. This outcome was met when a School Improvement plan was produced and submitted to the implementation facilitator and site administration for review. After prioritizing the list of problems and issues of concern, the faculty chose three areas of greatest need and formulated a plan for improvement. The teachers were solely responsible for the plan and the coordination of their proposed solutions with the site

Figure 1. Teacher attendance trend in the twelve week period.

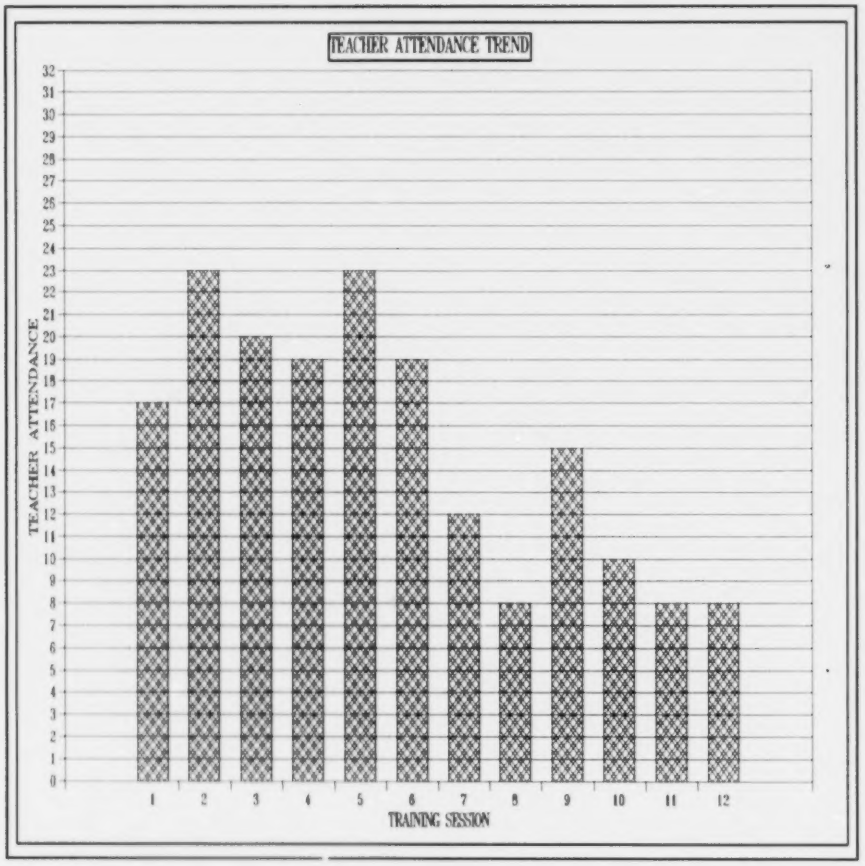

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Table 1

Teacher Empowerment Assessment Survey

	SA	A	D	SD	N
1. The majority of teachers are aware of school purposes and goals.	2	10	3	0	0
2. The administration involves the staff in development of instructional issues, programs.	1	11	1	2	0
3. The administration is sensitive to and supportive of staff needs.	0	7	7	1	0
4. The administration encourages teacher to display leadership and creative involvement in the instructional process.	6	8	0	1	0
5. Teachers are actively involved in school planning.	6	6	3	0	0
6. Teachers are actively involved in developing and reviewing the school's organizational goals.	6	5	4	0	0
7. Teachers have the ability to influence decisions regarding school related issues.	8	7	0	0	0
8. The current level of professional development for the staff is tailored to the needs of the school.	9	4	2	0	0
9. Teachers strive to maintain and enhance their professional status.	11	4	0	0	0
10. The school is united toward a positive goal.	2	9	3	1	0

Note. **SA** = Strongly Agree; **A** = Agree; **D** = Disagree; **SD** = Strongly Disagree; **N** = No Opinion.

administrator. Ultimately, a completed, final version of the teacher generated improvement plan was delivered to the site administrator for review and approval. By using an improvement plan drafted by the teachers themselves, observers would be provided with insight into the feelings and thoughts of those who wrote it.

Discussion

Writing and facilitating this practicum was a rewarding experience. The ability to observe the progress being made during each step of the implementation made the Practicum process an exciting endeavor. The most rewarding accomplishment during the practicum process manifested itself in the form of well written School Improvement plan for the school site. This School Improvement plan was developed by those who know the school site and its mechanics most intimately, the classroom teachers themselves.

The level of teacher attendance at empowerment training sessions was a factor that was somewhat underestimated when establishing the initial set of outcomes. At first, the number of teachers participating in the training sessions exceeded the initial outcome expectations. After a period of time had passed and the implementation was reaching its

final phase, teacher attendance and participation in the training meetings dropped off. This downward trend in teacher participation in the empowerment process was somewhat discouraging to the facilitator. This was a time when the teachers were expected to be giving their best effort and developing their School Improvement plan.

A bit of analysis and reflection was done in order to rationalize why this downward trend in teacher motivation had occurred. The author speculates that, although the faculty was willing to learn about the concept of empowerment and its processes, they were still apprehensive and did not truly believe that their School Improvement plan would be taken into serious consideration by the administration. This coincides with Shorts' (1992) finding that the more empowered teachers become the more faultfinding they are of the organization. These feelings of apprehension and general distrust seemed to be a prevalent thought pattern during most of the practicum implementation period. Outwardly, the teachers seemed willing to learn team building skills and the concepts of group dynamics, but still did not have the belief that their ideas would be taken seriously.

The Teacher Empowerment Assessment Survey Results

revealed the collective teacher thought process still did not truly believe that they were fully included in the decision making process and the dynamics of site based management. In three of the survey questions, eight or more teachers answered strongly agree. This number of "strongly agree" responses fell below the number initially established in the outcomes. While there were many "agree" responses, it appears the teachers will require positive action and concrete results on the part of the administration. Only through firm evidence that their efforts have been taken seriously and acted upon will teachers feel secure enough to try and make changes. The teachers must be made to feel that their time and efforts are not being wasted. Unfortunately, there is a strong undercurrent of feeling that most of the empowerment movement is merely chatter. Only by participating in activities such as this practicum can site administrators lessen or eliminate feelings of hopelessness and apathy.

As expected, the Teacher Empowerment Assessment Survey questions that pertained directly to teacher attitudinal and developmental issues possessed the majority of strongly agree responses. Questions relating directly to the teachers' feeling toward the administration possessed the majority of the lowest

responses on the survey scale. Although the outcome of having 8 or more teachers answer "strongly agree" to 5 or more questions was not met, the empowerment process at the school site cannot be seen as a failure. The low number of "strongly agree" responses can be offset by the high number of "agree" responses. This can show that, while teachers are on their way to believing in empowerment, they are not yet fully committed. Another point of concern was that only 15 out of 32 surveys were returned. This in itself will skew the number of responses that can be expected for each of the possible responses. Initially, 8 out of 32 teachers were expected to respond in the "strongly agree" area making a 1/4 proportion. When only 15 surveys were returned, the proportion required to meet the stated outcome became 8/15 proportion. When considering the peak of teacher attendance for the training meetings was 23, 15 surveys being returned cannot be looked upon as unsuccessful.

In the end, the teachers developed an innovative and insightful plan for improvement. The plan focused on three major areas for improvement: curriculum and instruction, professional growth, and technology advancement. Several objectives were established in each of the areas along with respective strategies,

timeliness and evaluation guidelines. The proposed improvements and/or changes were scheduled to occur over the course of one year. However, some of the improvements will continue and expand in the years to come.

Recommendations

The writer believes the empowerment process is necessary to the evolution of our educational system. After analyzing the project, hindsight suggests that the following recommendations may make the implementation of the empowerment process easier and more acceptable for all parties involved.

1. All information and news concerning the empowerment process should be made available to all faculty members.
2. An adequate number of planning sessions for developing the teachers' plan of action should be scheduled. It was discovered that substantially more time could have been spent in this area.
3. Keep the size of the brainstorming groups small. No more than 5 to 6 people should be in a group to hold effective brainstorming sessions. Larger groups tend to lose their focus easily.
4. Be certain to have the total support of the site administration.

5. Have teachers start small with achievable goals and expectations.

Dissemination

At the present time, the author is applying for the opportunity to present the practicum results at a district level staff development inservice.

When speaking to faculty leaders at other area school sites, they have expressed a substantial amount of interest in conducting similar training and improvement sessions at their school sites. The logistics of how to export this program is still under development.

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APPENDIX

Teacher Empowerment Assessment Survey

Teacher Empowerment Assessment Survey

SA : Strongly Agree
A : Agree
D : Disagree
SD : Strongly Disagree
N : No Opinion

1. The majority of teachers are aware of school purposes and goals.

____ SA ____ A ____ D ____ SD ____ N

2. The administration involves the staff in development of instructional issues, programs.

____ SA ____ A ____ D ____ SD ____ N

3. The administration is sensitive to and supportive of staff needs.

____ SA ____ A ____ D ____ SD ____ N

4. The administration encourages teacher to display leadership and creative involvement in the instructional process.

____ SA ____ A ____ D ____ SD ____ N

5. Teachers are actively involved in school planning.

____ SA ____ A ____ D ____ SD ____ N

6. Teachers are actively involved in developing and reviewing the school's organizational goals.

____ SA ____ A ____ D ____ SD ____ N

7. Teachers have the ability to influence decisions regarding school related issues.

____ SA ____ A ____ D ____ SD ____ N

8. The current level of professional development for the staff is tailored to the needs of the school.

____ SA ____ A ____ D ____ SD ____ N

9. Teachers strive to maintain and enhance their professional status.

____ SA ____ A ____ D ____ SD ____ N

10. The school is united toward a positive goal

____ SA ____ A ____ D ____ SD ____ N